



Ed Bry

Bird hunters have to get HIP for migratory birds other than just ducks and geese. Before hunting birds like this mourning dove, or swans, mergansers, coots, cranes, snipe, woodcock, ducks and geese, hunters need to register with the Harvest Information Program.

Migratory Game Bird Hunters Need to Get HIP

By Greg Freeman

North Dakota's migratory game bird hunting seasons officially kick off September 1 with opening day for dove and early Canada goose. A requirement that some hunters have overlooked in past years – and will receive considerable attention this fall – is the Harvest Information Program certification.

HIP is a survey method developed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in order to collect more reliable estimates of migratory bird harvests throughout the country. These estimates provide information biologists need to make sound decisions concerning hunting seasons, bag limits and population management.

HIP provides both state and federal wildlife agencies the information necessary to justify and maintain hunting seasons, according to Mike Johnson, North Dakota Game and Fish Department migratory game bird management supervisor.

"Compliance is critical," Johnson said. "Without accurate harvest information, it will become increasingly difficult to maintain seasons for those species less hunted, and difficult to expand any of our current seasons."

In previous years, more often than not, hunters who failed to comply with the regulation were issued warnings. "It was a relatively new requirement in North Dakota, so we were issuing warnings the first few years," said Roger Rostvet, Game and Fish Department Deputy Director.

But the days of warnings are gone, Rostvet said. "Since HIP certification has been in place in North Dakota since 1998, warnings will no longer be given. Instead, citations will be issued."

A report by the Ad Hoc Committee of the International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies indicated that not all migratory bird hunters are getting HIP certified. Hunter compliance is essential in order to obtain reliable national and regional estimates of annual harvest of all migratory game bird species.

The regulation requires all migratory game bird hunters to register annually with HIP before hunting ducks, geese, swans, mergansers, coots, cranes, snipe, doves or woodcock. Certification – and a different HIP number – is also required for waterfowlers who hunt in more than one state. Hunters who were HIP certified during North Dakota's 2003 spring snow goose conservation season do not have to get certified this fall since it only has to be done once per calendar year.

Hunters who purchase a license through the Game and Fish Department's Bismarck office, its website at discovernd.com/gnf, or instant licensing telephone number at 800-406-6409, are automatically HIP certified.

Otherwise, hunters can call 888-634-4798 and record the HIP number on their fishing, hunting and furbearer certificate.

"By participating in HIP, hunters provide state and federal agencies with the avenue to collect good harvest information."

To comply with HIP, hunters must identify themselves as migratory bird hunters. Hunters are asked questions about their hunting experiences during last year's season. Answers to these questions are not used to compile harvest estimates, but are simply used to identify what types of birds they usually hunt.

Once HIP certified, names are put in a pool along with all other migratory bird hunters in the United States. Some hunters are then randomly selected from the pool and asked to complete a more detailed national survey about the current year's hunting season.

Hunters selected for the national survey will receive a letter and hunting record form, and will be asked to voluntarily keep track of the number of migratory birds shot during the season. This follow-up survey provides information used to develop nationwide harvest estimates for all migratory birds.

Responses from hunters who choose to participate in the national survey are kept confidential and are not used for any other purposes. Once the harvest survey is completed, the USFWS destroys all names and address records.

"HIP gives the hunter a great opportunity to provide information necessary to manage wildlife and to conserve the resource for future hunters," Johnson said. "By participating in HIP, hunters provide state and federal agencies with the avenue to collect good harvest information."

HIP was originally designed to improve small game harvest estimates. In 1990, state wildlife agencies asked the USFWS to develop a nationwide sign-up program for all migratory bird hunters. State biologists were concerned that federal harvest estimates were not providing adequate harvest information using traditional survey methodology.

HIP originated in some states in 1992. As of 1998, all states, except Hawaii, have been participating in the program.

GREG FREEMAN is the Game and Fish Department's news editor.

Buy your license...
get HIP

Migratory Bird Hunters:
Register with the
Harvest Information Program...

For the Future of Hunting

It's Free... It's Easy

1. Dig out your 2003 hunting or sportsmen's license and have your social security number handy.
2. Log on to the Game and Fish Department website at discovernd.com/gnf, click on HIP on the home page, and follow the instructions; write your HIP number on your license. Or ...
3. Call Toll-Free: 888-634-4798 or 800-406-6409.

If you will (or even think you will) hunt DUCKS, GESE, MOURNING DOVE, SNIPES, TUNDRA SWAN, SANDHILL CRANE, COOT or WOODCOCK in 2003, you need to register with the Migratory Bird Harvest Information Program prior to hunting.
HIP is necessary to identify all migratory bird hunters, regardless of age, as potential participants in nationwide migratory game bird harvest surveys. These surveys are important to the future of hunting, as they allow wildlife management agencies to better document harvests, which is vital to long-term management.

Now, Hunters who secured a HIP number for the spring 2003 snow goose season do not need to get another one to hunt this fall.

For more information, call the North Dakota Game and Fish Department 701-328-6300

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